The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 87, Vol. viii.] BELFAST, MARCH 1st, 1888. [For Gratuitous Circulation.

The Rev. J. C. Street acknowledges, with thanks, the receipt of the following contributions in aid of the gratuitous publication of the *Chronicle and Index*:—

W. A. Adamson, Carrickfergus, ...	£0	2	6
Mrs. Lindsay, Killylea, ...	0	5	0
Thomas Ruddell, Lurgan, ...	0	5	0
Rev. A. H. Shelley, Templepatrick,	0	2	6
J. G., Belfast, ...	0	2	6

Further subscriptions are invited.

We are very glad to announce that the Rev. Silas Farrington, of Manchester, has consented to preach the Annual Sermons of the Unitarian Society on Easter Sunday. As an eminent preacher, of great reputation both in the United States and the United Kingdom, he is sure of a hearty welcome. Details about the anniversaries will be given in our next issue.

There is an excellent opportunity at present for obtaining books and stationery at the Depository at very low prices. We hope our friends will avail themselves of it.

The subjects on which the Rev. J. C. Street lectured during the Sunday evenings of February were as follows:—

Feb. 5. Is there Salvation after Death?
,, 12. Temporal Salvation.
,, 19. Is it ever "too late to Mend?"
,, 26. The Grandeur of Man's Nature.

Monthly Religious Services for the Young were conducted at Rosemary Street Schools on Sunday, February 5th, and at Hopeton Street School on Sunday, February 19th. The attendance was good on both occasions.

Satisfactory Annual Meetings of the members of the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association, and the Domestic Mission to the Poor of Belfast, were held in the Central Hall, during the month of February. Our friend, the Rev. J. Panton Ham, was the preacher for the Association.

We are glad to notice that the Rev. A. Turner is now settled over the congregation at Raloo, in succession to the Rev. E. S. Anthony. We hope he may have a successful ministry.

The Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association had a busy and useful time in February. The following was the programme:

Feb. 6. Poetry. Mr. W. G. Mulligan, B.A., LL.D.
,, 13. Burke and the Present Discontent. Mr. S. Millin.
,, 20. The Physical and Antiquarian Features of Co. Antrim. Mr. W. Gray, M.R.I.A.
,, 27. Who are our greatest Novelists?

The papers were excellent, the discussions sparkling, and the attendances very good.

The controversy between Mr. Spurgeon and the Baptist Union is growing more interesting. He is not to be conciliated or won over, though the Union has lowered its flag, and consented to put upon record a statement of faith that many of its members must have found it difficult to accept. Still, they have not gone far enough for him. They have laid a yoke upon themselves, without winning him back. He and those who agree with them are to build up once more a Calvinistic sect—to crumble to pieces like all those which have preceded it.

Once more God's truth is supposed to be in danger, and unable to protect itself, or be protected by God, and Mr. Spurgeon comes to the rescue. No doubt Truth will be safe. The following is the new Creed:—

The following declaration was adopted at a meeting of the council held at 19, Furnival Street, London, E.C., on Tuesday, February 21st:—

1. That the doctrinal beliefs of the Union are, and must be, determined by the doctrinal beliefs of the Churches and Associations of which the Union is composed.

2. That the Council of the Union therefore disclaim altogether any authority to formulate a new and additional standard of theological belief as a bond of union, to which assent shall be required.

3. But whilst expressly disavowing and disallowing any power to control belief or to restrict inquiry, yet, in view of the uneasiness produced in the Churches by recent discussions, and to show our agreement with one another, and with our fellow-Christians on the great truths of the Gospel, the Council deem it right to say that—

(a) Baptised into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we have avowed repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—the very elements of a new life; as in the Supper we avow our union with one another, while partaking of the symbol of the body of our Lord, broken for us, and of the blood shed for the remission of sins. The union, therefore, is an association of churches and ministers professing not only to believe the facts and doctrines of the Gospel, but to have undergone the spiritual change expressed or implied in them. This change is the fundamental principle of our church life.

(b) The following facts and doctrines are commonly believed by the Churches of the Union:—

1. The Divine Inspiration and authority of the Holy Scripture as the supreme and sufficient rule of our faith and practice, and the right and duty of individual judgment in the interpretation of it.

2. The fallen and sinful state of man.

3. The Deity, the incarnation, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His sacrificial and mediatorial work.

4. Justification by faith—a faith that works by love and produces holiness.

5. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the sanctification of all who believe.

6. The resurrection; the judgment at the last day; with the eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked. As a historical fact the final six words of this statement have been generally accepted by the great majority of the Union in the usual sense; but, from the first, some, while reverently accepting all divine teaching, have accepted other interpretations which seem to them consistent with that form of words, and the Union have had no difficulty in working with them.

James Culross, President.
John Clifford, Vice-President.
Samuel Harris Booth, Secretary.

We have not only the company of Jesus, but of other large and strong souls, who stand with him in the same group of humanity's leaders and teachers. We do not believe that the high tide of human nobleness appeared only in the little strip of country known as Judea, but that all round the globe that tide has rolled, and that among every great people and in every great historical religion there have been those who, in character and beneficent influence, have come near to the same high-water mark. Weak as is average humanity, poor and distressed as are large sections of it, corrupt and wicked as multitudes of its individuals are, yet it is not so weak, so poor, so wicked, but that examples of high virtue have sprung up in all quarters of the world, and the noblest moral and spiritual truths have found utterance in every nation that has had a literature. If it be comforting and strengthening to weak human nature to find those rules for righteous living which we call divine illustrated so clearly in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, then how should comfort and strength be multiplied for us when we see the same rules illustrated in many another of the world's religious teachers and founders, wise men and saints, martyrs and philanthropists, who have lived and died that truth might be glorified, and righteousness be established on its own eternal foundations!

W. J. Potter.

The National Conference of the members and friends of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other Non-Subscribing or kindred Congregations will be held at Leeds, on the 24th, 25th, and 26th April, 1888.

The programme is no less interesting than those of previous meetings. The anticipated presence of the Rev. Dr. Martineau, and the

importance of the subject of Organisation, which he has undertaken to introduce, will not only make the meeting specially attractive, but will also be likely to give it an important influence on the future life of our Churches. Several foreign visitors, viz., Professor Bracciforti, of Milan; Herr Edward Wavrinsky, President of the Society of Rational Believers in Göteborg; and probably a representative from the United States, will bring to the Conference first-hand information as to the condition of our Churches in Europe and America.

No doubt our Congregations and Associations will take care to be duly represented at these interesting meetings.

HOW I LEFT ORTHODOXY.

BY JAMES C. STREET.

"BRIGHTER OUTLOOKS! THE WILDERNESS BLOSSOMING AS THE ROSE. NO CASTES, BUT UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD."

No. 5—*Continued.*

In those days my childhood and youth were oppressed by religion. Nothing was so real to me, and nothing so terrible. The world in which I lived was a very small and narrow one; I knew very little. Geographically I was confined within a very definite locality, and of the vastness and variety of the surface of the earth, and of the myriads of people and their manifold diversities I was completely ignorant. My reading was confined to few books. I conversed with but few people. I heard very few new things. I was in the very thick of the strife for daily bread, I knew what it was to toil and struggle, and I saw how we, and many like us, had to pinch, and spare, and calculate, so that we might hold safely on our course from day to day. The luxuries of this world were unknown to me. My lot was hard and trying. Not for me were the sweet meadows or breezy upland; I could not escape to the babbling brook or the rushing river; I heard not the roll of the sea, or the blythe song of the bird, and only as a chance and feverish joy did I get a glimpse of the passages of some God-inspired poet. But my circle of life was filled with religious talk. It was the one theme. If it could only have lifted me out of my little world, if it could have enlarged my outlook, if it could have spoken of brighter regions, of fair flowers, of sweet peace, of undying blessedness, what a boon it would have been and what a joy it would have brought to my weary life! But no! It was hard, stern, terrible. It made me understand that I was bad, that I could not be better unless God had willed it, that all around me were in like condition, and that when the weary round of the world's work was done, and the mill of God had ground us as He intended, we were swept away to our eternal destiny and left in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter. One little experience comes back to me as I look back, and it may be taken as a sample of many such that marked one portion of my career. I was at the time engaged in very arduous and, to me, very sickening work. I was very young, and I had to earn my daily bread, and the peculiar work which I had to do made me many a time sick and ill. My clothes were offensive to me. I shrank from myself, and I could not bear to come nigh other people. Early and late I worked. One evening as I went homewards after the day's work was done, and after I had been peculiarly miserable owing to what had taken place around me, I thought how miserable life was, and how wretched everything was about me, and I tried to find some little comfort from Religion. I was not wise, I was not learned, I was stumbling like a child with no strong hand to uphold me, and no doubt I blundered and hurt myself, but I could find neither comfort nor help; my very prayers seemed to come back to me and mock me in my misery, and I remember crying out, "Would to God I had never been born, or that I could die and never live again." This was the dreadful wilderness in which I lived.

But happily for me the changes came which I have set forth in order to you in my previous lectures. I came upon unexpected turning points in my journey. Happy surprises were vouchsafed to me. One soft hand blinded my eyes, and one led me steadily forward. Then the hand was taken from my eyes, and the

scene was changed before me. I had moved—I hardly knew how or where—but the sands of the desert were enriched by sweet waters, and the gurgling stream fed the roots of the climbing trees whose branches were made musical with the songs of birds. Oases sprang up in the desert of my life. Every now and then I came upon some sweet garden of the Lord, and the wilderness began to smile. But like other pilgrims I had still to go forward. "Onward, ever onward," was the cry. And again I was amid the wastes—again I had to toil the weary way, and to long for the shadow of a great rock, or for the fruit from life's glad tree. But I was not so hopeless as I had been. I had the memory of the oases I had seen. I could dwell upon the recollection of its delicious waters and its mellifluous songsters, while the rustle of the leaves of its trees murmured their sweet music in my soul. I never could be as unhappy and as desolate as I had been. The world might be a wilderness, and life a sorry thing, but there were spots of beauty in it, and life could be enriched by some entrancing joys. And as again and again I found in my journey new delights, new wonders, new truths, new flashes from God, I felt a mighty change gradually taking place in me, and my outlook became every day more striking and wonderful; and when at last there came to me the full blaze of the revelation of God's Fatherhood I felt that I had become a new creature, that the old world of my youth had passed away, that gloom and horror had flown, that the wilderness was blossoming as the rose, and that life was itself a wondrous good. My estimate of religion changed; it was no longer gloomy. I felt no more a terror of it. It had gradually grown into a priceless pleasure, and I understood that

> "Religion never was designed
> To make our pleasures less."

Now the significance of Emerson's lines, had I only known them then, would have been fully appreciated—

> "All before us lies the way,
> Give the past unto the wind;
> All before us is the day,
> Night and darkness are behind."

I now went along my life journey, singing as I went—I was not afraid. No fear of the grave, no fear of Hell, and above all no fear of God was in my soul. All that fear belonged to the dark days of the past—to the sands of the desert. I was in the sunlight. The world had become beautiful, everything around me smiled, my heart leaped up within me, my mind was no longer wild and forced, but was as unrestrained as liquid music from the upsoaring lark. I could go on my way rejoicing. What was the change? Had I become rich? Were luxuries at my command? Had I gone into new regions of the world? None of these things. My surroundings were the same as before. My outward conditions were the same. I still had to toil and to struggle. My world even yet was a small one. But yet everything was wondrously changed. The old order had given place to the new. The change was in myself. My eyes were opened. I saw as I had never seen before. The wilderness smiled. The highway of God was clear before my eyes. I understood the superb language of a prophet of old, "the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands." The solitary places were made glad. There had grown up in me a great love for God my Father. I seemed to feel the grasp of His hand and the beating of His heart. I could speak to Him. I could throw my cares upon Him. I could open my heart to Him. I could look up to His dear face and trust Him. I felt myself safe; absolutely safe in His keeping. Nothing could crush me; nothing could ruin me; nothing could dismay me. He solved my life problems; He smoothed my path; He guided my steps; He wiped away my tears; He was my Father and my friend. Do you wonder that the "wilderness blossomed as the rose?" I had been led by strange and devious ways, but at length I had thrown myself in absolute trust upon the Fatherhood of God.

Here stood I, then, upon the sun-crowned height. Was I to shut my eyes now, or was I to gaze out upon the prospect spread before me?"

When once you have grasped a great principle and taken it into your life you

cannot hide it, bury it, or kill it. It is a living power, a quickening spirit, a mighty generator. It partakes of the life of God, it enters into His infinity, and it is stamped with His creative power.

I had now reached and grasped the idea of God's Fatherhood. I could not let that idea lie dormant. I felt that while in itself it was a glorious truth it involved other truths also full of meaning and significance to all the sons of men. Paternity to me meant not merely generation or creation, but infinitely more—it meant *love*. The word was, in my mind, associated with all that was strong, wise, tender, watchful, and loving, and when all this was uplifted to the thought of an infinite and Almighty Father the affluence of these great qualities surpassed the power of my comprehension. Do what I could, use what language I might, I could not even faintly approximate to the reality that was in God. My loftiest language could only be the lisping of a child, my sublimest dream could be no more than a flicker from the Eternal Light. God's goodness was utterly beyond all I could hope, imagine, or conjecture. It transcended infinitely the utmost bound of all my wishes; as the heavens are higher than the earth so did God's great love transcend all that I or man or men could think about Him.

As I stood on this eternal height I turned my thoughts to earth, and looked out upon the world of man. What was it I saw there?

As years passed over my head my knowledge increased, and my experience amplified. I grew into manhood. I took my place in a larger world than I had known before. I mixed with fresh people. I read many books. I journeyed from place to place. I found there were rich people as well as poor, educated as well as ignorant. Not many miles away from where I lived there were the seats, the palaces of some of the mightiest of the land. Crowning the great rock of my native town were the charred ruins of the palatial home of the Dukes of Newcastle, burnt in the uprisings of the people in 1831. From its height could be seen, over rich cornfields and sun-crowned woods, the ducal castle of the Rutlands. Not far away was the region of the Dukeries. The dukes were thick upon the ground. Their palaces were superb; their parks were magnificent. The owners of these splendid places and extensive properties were a race apart from the rest of our world. The contrast between their lot and the lot of the poor stocking-loom weaver or the factory girl could hardly be exaggerated. They seemed not to belong to the same world. "I can do as I like with my own," said one of the dukes, and he owned half a county and held in his hands an almost irresponsible power over the fortunes, if not the lives, of all the tenants on his estate. The conflagration of Nottingham Castle was the answer to this ducal assumption. An aristocracy like this, with everything at command that the world itself could produce, and a people who were struggling with killing poverty from day to day, seemed to have little in common, and to have no relationship to one another. Between these extremes were many other grades, shading off from one another by almost imperceptible differences, but yet keeping so much apart in all the social intercourses of life that one could not help but feel that there was a graduated system of class keeping men apart as though by cast-iron boundaries, and dividing them as if they belonged to widely-separated spheres. Society was made up of etiquettes and social proprieties. There were bounds that could not be passed. Only certain classes of people could visit or know each other. Patronage flowed downwards. Rank touched rank, and just glanced below. So down in the social scale went on these graduated patronages until it was made clear to the dullest intelligence that between the classes there was a great gulf fixed which in this world could never be passed. In Christendom caste was as dominant as in India. We have our Brahmins and Sudras, our masters and slaves, our lords and serfs. Looking out upon the great world I saw this system of caste prevailing everywhere. Men lorded it over one another. Some thought themselves born to command, while others were born to obey. Across the seas, in America, our own brethren were holding men and women in bondage as though

they were beasts of burden or cattle for the market. Men and women were bought and sold like oxen and sheep. Children were bred for the slave market. Men and women were put upon the auction block and handled and appraised like pigs or poultry. Elihu Burritt sent out his "Sparks from the Anvil" to ignite this foul system; Lloyd Garrison never ceased to agitate against this "sum of all villainies," and my heart was all aglow with sympathy. There seemed to me something utterly and absolutely wrong, not only in negro or other slavery, but in this whole system of caste, separating people from one another, putting impassable barriers between them, and bringing God's human world into hopeless tangles and chaos.

How far would the new principle of life which I had found in the Fatherhood of God carry me amid these divisions and diversities? The step was so easy, so natural, and so inevitable that its very simplicity startled me. If God was our Father then we were all "brethren." Then, no matter what our colour, creed, language, country, or condition we were literally and absolutely of the same kith and kin. Dukes and costermongers, planters and swamp slaves, kings and peasants, Brahmin and Sudra were of the same blood, had the same ancestry, the same nature, and the same destiny.

All this, as I have said, seemed at once so natural and inevitable that it appears hardly worth dwelling upon or in any detailed way setting before you. But you must remember I am telling the development of my own life and thought, and tracking my way through the stages of my journey. You may say all this is clear to you, and is of the very alphabet of your religion. You may claim that all this have you known from your youth upwards. If so I am glad, and I congratulate you upon it. But be sure that it is so, and be sure that you have applied the simple truth which you say you have known so long. To me the truth of man's brotherhood came as wonderfully, and seemed as tremendous in its influence and consequences as did the truth of God's Fatherhood. I felt a new thrill pass through my being when I first realised that all men were brothers. Of course I had read that fine passage in Paul's speech at Athens: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth," and that even loftier passage of John's: "Now are we sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but I had read without appropriating. My nature had not grasped all that these words contain. I do not know that even yet it has. But you know how it is possible to go on reading from day to day words that sound familiarly in our ears, and yet to fail to grasp in any distinct and conscious way the meaning they contain. But some day some chord is stirred, some tone is struck, and a new music awakes which thrills us by its glorious harmonies. A new light is thrown upon the old words, and unexpected meanings burst in upon us. To myself this has often been the case. It was so touching, this doctrine of human brotherhood. I did not get at it by any statements contained in any books, though the statements were there, and I had read them unnumbered times, nor from any speaker, though it had ofttimes been sounded in my ears; it came to me as an outgrowth of my belief in the Fatherhood and Love of God. If He was my Father He was the Father of all mankind. If He loved me, He loved all men. If I was His son, they were His sons, and if we were sons then we were brethren. How delightfully simple, but how superbly grand. As in its wondrous significance it burst in upon me the whole system of caste, slavery, class distinction, rank, like a house of cards fell toppling over about me, and I was once more in a new world.

I did not, except for a passing moment, fall into the mistake that because all men were brethren therefore all men were equal. No doubt at the first flush of this new revelation I did hurry into the conclusion that we were all equal. Perhaps, if we could look to final issues it might yet appear that this first outburst of conviction was not erroneous, and that it contains at its root a very truth of God. But meanwhile I speedily sobered down and came from poetic heights to the prose of facts.

I found as I did so that it was difficult, if not impossible, to find equality anywhere, that the members of the same family were by no means all equal, that they differed in gifts and graces, and that in capacity they presented great contrasts. Moreover, I saw in the world, all around me, proofs abundant and manifold that there seemed to be not merely outward but inward differences so marked and pronounced that the simplest child could recognise them. But I also observed that these differences were by no means conterminous with the differences in rank and social condition. I saw great men among all ranks, and small men among all ranks. I noticed that greatness of soul could be found among the humblest as well as among the highest, and, as I read closely and traced the history of men I found the greatest had sprung from the humblest ranks, that the cottage was higher than the castle, that the mighty ones of the world's history had not sat upon thrones, or lived in palaces, but had occupied the humblest places, passed through a willing poverty, out of weakness had become strong, and from their lowliness had sent the word of inspiration to the loftiest. So I had no difficulty in determining that the world's standards and divisions were not trustworthy, and that castes could not be defended upon the common modes of reasoning. I found that industry, character, perseverance and genius, as well as descent through pure and honest parentage, had more to do with real difference than rank and gold and guinea stamp. But whatever the inequalities among well-constituted families I soon saw this great fact—that the weak, the tender, the lame, the afflicted enlisted an especial love and oversight, that on these the tenderest love was bestowed, that the home life was specially adapted for them, that they were first and last in the thoughts of the parents, and that the stronger members of the family instinctively softened their tone of voice, subdued the rigour of their action, and moulded their whole conduct to the standard of the weakest of their number. Where there was any departure from this gentle rule, it always stood forth condemned, and was pronounced unworthy and unnatural. From this human experience I lifted up my thought to God. Was not He our Father? Were not these weak and frail ones His children as well as the strong and robust? Was it likely that this Almighty Parent was forgetful or unmindful of His little ones? I knew this could not be so. Fatherhood meant love for all, and, if possible, the greatest love for the neediest.

But the world presented to my mind a strange perplexity. In the home circle, I mean the pure, loving, religious, home circle, the poor frail ones were most tenderly cared for and watched over. Every agency there was shaped to their necessities, and all that was brightest, fairest, and most helpful was lovingly brought around them; their steps were tenderly guided, their pillows were smoothed by loving hands, their pains were relieved by watchful care, and all was done that lay within the grasp of possibility to make their lot easier, happier, brighter. But when I stepped outside these homes and mixed in the great world how strange the contrast! The weak were driven to the wall. The strong strode past and over them. Flaunting their splendour in the face of poverty and rags the children of affluence swept by. The prison, the workhouse, the penitentiary, the hulks, and the labour gang stood opposite to the palaces, the parks, the cathedrals, the art galleries, and the clubs. Squalor and splendour, ignorance and culture, weakness and majesty, confronted each other, lord and slave stood face to face, under the same sky, on the same acres, fanned by the same breezes, but so different from each other that they seemed not of the same order of beings or to belong to the same world of life. I saw how one sufferer could command the care of the most skilful physicians and most experienced of nurses, and that the remedial products of the most distant parts of the earth were gathered for his use, while servants and troops of friends were ready to come and go, to fetch and carry, in order that the sufferer might be relieved, while multitudes of others were crowded into the wards of an almshouse, where they had the occasional glance of the hurried doctor, the impatient touch of an overwrought nurse, the scantiest of food, and only the faces of cold and unsympathetic strangers to gaze upon, while thousands of others were gasping their life away in squalid hovels, and pestilential fever haunts, and roofless cabins, and others were dying at our doors and in our streets, or finding a grave in the gloomy river.

Herein was a marvellous contrast! The problem was a strange and startling one.

(To be continued.)

The Treasurer of the Unitarian Society begs to acknowledge receipt of the following subscriptions for 1887:—

George Fisher	£0	5	0
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Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association.

SIXTEENTH SESSION, 1887-88.

The Committee have the pleasure of announcing the following

PROGRAMME FOR MARCH, 1888.

1888.

March 5—"On Earth, Peace!" .. .. Mr. Geo. Fisher.
" 12—"Some of the Sacred Books of the World," .. .. .. Mr. J. H. Gilliland.
" 19—"The Humours of a Rambler," .. Mr. H. Riddell, M.E.
" 26—"Woman," .. .. .. Mr. C. J. Knox.

The Meetings are held on MONDAY EVENINGS at Eight o'clock, in the Rosemary Street Schools.

MEMBER'S SUBSCRIPTION.—4s. per annum, which entitles to the use of the Library. Subscriptions for the Sixteenth Session are now due and should be paid to the Treasurer, D. BULMER, 32, Queen Street, *as early as possible.*

The Library will be open at 1 p.m. on Sundays, and on every Monday Evening during the Session.

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J. H. GILLILAND, } *Secs.*

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